



## RDA - What does it stand for?

**W**ell for some it is 'Recommended Daily Allowance' or it could refer to the Regional Development Agencies, but for a whole army of volunteers throughout the land it means Riding for the Disabled Association.

Here on the Isle of Wight we are proud to have a riding group and one of a select band of pony driving groups, based at Osborne House the property once owned by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and now in the care of English Heritage.

From April 'til September each year, weather permitting, a dedicated group of helpers and volunteers meet to assist a growing number of novice and experienced drivers enjoy the thrill of trotting around the fields and drives of this imposing house with its beautifully kept grounds.

Even a complete beginner with no previous experience of horses can be taught to drive by our caring and fully qualified team of able bodied whips (instructors), patience comes as standard along with laughter, joy and lots of fun. There is no expected level of achievement, everyone works to their own capabilities, desires and comfort level at a speed that suits them.

### Year-round events

Throughout the year, even in the winter months when driving is not possible, coffee mornings, bring-and-buys and quizzes occupy us and keep the companionship afloat. Then come April, there is a big cleaning session of traps and sorting of equipment, everything has to be thoroughly checked, and repaired if necessary, in advance of the impending new season. What has been forgotten over the winter months is relearned, training days are planned for new recruits.

The bicycles are serviced and tyres checked in readiness to accompany any trap which drives any distance away from the main group. This is a safety and security measure in the event of some upset during a drive – luckily a rare occurrence. As a double precaution, a mobile phone is now on hand, a big advantage from today's technology.

So the summer season gets underway and those drivers waiting their turn, sit and chat, enjoying a cup of tea or coffee. This is a good time to compare notes, ask advice, have a good laugh and make friends. Any spare garden produce finds its way to the refreshment table and takings go into the kitty to fund the drinks (recycling at its best!).

A dressage arena and a cones course are laid out most weeks for anyone to use, working towards our Fun Day held near the end of the season. Competition for this is quite intense but even those who didn't do so well get lots of support and encouragement. Everyone gathers round for a picnic lunch with time afterwards for any others to have a go. Later after all the scores are added up, rosettes and trophies are awarded at the end of another successful day.

As long as the weather permits, we will keep driving but eventually the end of season lunch heralds close of business for another summer, then it just remains to organise the Christmas get together.

*Interested in finding out more? Visit our website at [www.iowrda.org](http://www.iowrda.org) or contact Riding for the Disabled Association head office on 01926 405972 for your local branch, but please tell them you heard about us first.*

*Elaine Jones from the Isle of Wight group enjoying a drive.*



### Carriage Driving Conferences

Once again in 2009 the RDA Carriage Driving Committee will be organising four carriage driving conferences at different venues to encourage as many groups as possible to attend.

The following dates and venues have been arranged:

Croft Top, Accrington –	5 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Stonar School, Wilts –	16 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Oatridge College, Edinburgh –	24 <sup>th</sup> Feb
Ashfields EC, Essex –	TBC

### Suggestions

The RDA Carriage Driving Committee would like your views on how they can help. If you or any member of your group, including your drivers have suggestions for topics that would be of benefit to RDA Carriage Driving as a whole, they would be delighted to consider them.

*Please contact the Carriage Driving Coordinator at National Office, Telephone 0845 241 1385 or your Regional Carriage Driving Representative or any Committee member.*